



United States Department of Agriculture

New Jersey State Technical Committee Minutes of March 10, 2011

Those in attendance:

Mike Westendorf, NJAES
Laura Gladney, NJAES
Charles Roohr, NJDA
Stefanie Miller, NJDA
Brad Smith, TNC
Eric Schrading, USF&WS
Elizabeth Ciuzio, USF&WS
Nancy Coles, FSA
Paul Hlubik, FSA
Barbara Phillips, NRCS
Tim Dunne, NRCS
Dan Mull, NRCS
Janice Reid, NRCS
Don Pettit, NRCS
Fran DeFiccio, NRCS
Lauren Rega, NRCS

Christine Hall, NRCS
Howard Henderson, RD
Kristina Heinemann, USEPA
Kathleen Savino-Foley, USEPA
Shandreel Anderson, USEPA
Ken Sickman, Morris County SCD
Lori, Jenssen, NJ Forestry Assoc.
Troy Joshua, NJASS
Kathleen Hitchner, NJDEP
Nick Zripko, NJDEP
Harold Nebling, NJDEP
Liz Thompson, NJFB
Marie Banasiak, NJFB
Nicole Goger, NJFB
Kelly Munz, Centenary College

The meeting was called to order at 10:24 a.m. Donald Petit welcomed everyone and expressed appreciation to the Centenary College Equestrian Center and Alstede Farms for allowing us the opportunity to have a State Technical Committee conservation tour. He expressed excitement for the tour and the ability for everyone to see what NRCS and our partners are doing to get conservation on the ground.

March meeting minutes review was deferred to the next meeting.

NRCS/USDA 2011 Budget Status

NRCS along with other USDA agencies saw a significant impact in the FY 2011 budget. NRCS involvement with the Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D) has been defunded. NRCS is currently working on an orderly close-out of the program. RC&D, as a non-profit organization, can provide a way for local residents to work together and actively solve environmental, economic and social problems within the community. New Jersey has two RC&D Councils (North and South). NRCS provided a coordinator to oversee the organization of RC&D projects along with office space and supplies. The RC&D councils will still exist, but NRCS will no longer be involved.

AMA – Agricultural Management Assistance Program
AWEP – Agricultural Water Enhancement Program
CAP – Conservation Activity Plan
CCPI – Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative
CIG – Conservation Innovation Grant
CRP – Conservation Reserve Program
CREP – Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentive Program
FRPP – Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program
GRP – Grassland Reserve Program
HFRP – Healthy Forest Reserve Program
SAFE – State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement
WHIP – Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program
WRP – Wetlands Reserve Program

Helping People Help the Land

An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

In addition to the RC&D program, the Small Watershed Projects program was defunded. New Jersey has not recently been involved in this program. The Dam Rehabilitation program was funded through the 2011 budget, but there is speculation that the program may be defunded in 2012.

Because the budget was not received until mid-year into the FY 2011 budget, the cuts were amplified over a 6 month period. We must submit our budget for remainder of FY 2011 within the next week.

NJ NRCS has begun making reductions in our budget in anticipation for potential reductions in 2012. We are making reductions and trimming costs such as travel and supplies. All attempts will be made to not reduce the workforce. Because we are anticipating more cuts for next year, we are trying to minimize our costs now.

We are fortunate to have good partnerships that share personnel costs. These partnerships are a win-win, and we would like to continue to have those partnerships.

A Buy-Out program was offered to those affected by defunding and a department-wide early-out program was also offered. There is speculation that an early-out program will continue with expected cuts in the FY 2012 budget.

In addition, we are closing the Clinton Field Support Office. This office housed 4 RC&D employees, 1 NRCS RC&D coordinator, 3 NRCS technical specialists, and 3 Rural Development employees. The NRCS employees will be dispersed to other field offices. This move will save overhead expenses and prevent reductions in our workforce.

Howard Henderson echoed Don's concerns for this year's and next year's budgets for RD as well.

Old Business

CRP, CREP, SAFE, GRP

Nancy Coles handed out a status report on CRP, CREP, and SAFE as of the end of May 2011.

Total CRP contracts increased by 22; including 23 new practices and 171.5 acres. Rental payments increased by \$14,000.

CREP contracts now total 167, including 4.7 acres of waterways and 32.9 acres of filter strips. The average contract rate has increased \$1.10 perhaps due to better soils.

SAFE is separated into three project areas. The Heritage project area increased by 43.3 acres and has an offer of 24.2 acres. The Grassland project area now has 297 contracted acres, up by 109.3 acres. The Raritan-Piedmont area has increased by 45 acres (through 3 contracts). There are currently 4 offers to be contracted. If all offers are accepted, then approximately half of the project area will be contracted. CP38E-1 and CP38E-2 were added to the practice list.

Total CRP payments issued to date (not included cost-share) is \$362,881.12.

GRP payments issued in 2011 to date for prior year contracts totaled \$28,679. Payments on prior year contracts occur on the anniversary date of the contract so not all 2011 payments have been made. For 2011, FSA is working on 7 new contracts totaling \$87,871.

A question was posed about whether well-head protection would be a feasible practice in NJ. Janice Reid responded explaining that the practice applies to where farming is done up to and could be affecting a public water supply, and does not appear to be a common practice in NJ.

New Business

State Resource Assessment

Tim Dunne gave an overview of the quick, intensive State Resource Assessment (SRA) Project. Fortunately for the project, Christine Hall was available to contribute to the SRA and played a critical role in completing the project. The purpose of the SRA is to help National and State Leadership have guidance on resource objectives. The findings will potentially help with funding and priority area decisions.

The SRA focused on nine major resource concerns. Under those nine major resource concerns, 31 natural resource concerns were identified. For example, under the major resource concern soil quality, there are three natural resource concerns: 1) Sheet, rill, and wind erosion, 2) Concentrated flow erosion, 3) Excessive bank erosion from streams, shorelines, or water conveyance channels. Of the 31, New Jersey chose 20 natural resource concerns that we felt were relevant to NJ conditions.

For each natural resource concern, we had to overlay that information with the different land uses: cropland, pastureland, forestland, and other associated agricultural land. We want to extend our appreciation regarding all the assistance that other organizations were able to provide, especially under such short notice.

We produced 20 maps to depict where the resource concerns are located. The maps depict a new emphasis on forestlands. The goal is to determine areas that are at risk and overlay that information with work that has been done and what needs treatment.

The STC survey ranked what natural resource concerns were most important for each land use. Thank you for all of the responses. We received 34 responses with the survey. The top three natural resource concerns for each land use are:

- Cropland: Soil Erosion, Water Quality Degradation, Soil Quality Degradation
- Pastureland: Water Quality Degradation, Soil Quality Degradation, Degraded Plant Condition
- Forestland: Degraded Plant Condition, Inadequate Habitat for Fish and Wildlife
- Other Associated Ag Land: Water Quality Degradation, Inefficient Energy Use, Soil Erosion

All information regarding the NJ SRA can be found on the New Jersey NRCS website at <http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/sra2011/index.html>. The SRA is likely to continue in following years and may be part of the funding formula. It could change how we do business by focusing our efforts on areas of concern.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held on September 14, 2011, at 10:00 a.m. in the Somerset State Office.

Conservation Tour

Kelly Munz led a short tour of the Centenary College Equine facilities, including the new waste storage facility and access road. Attendees then moved to Alstede Farms in Chester, where Kurt Alstede provided wagon tour of the farm's fields and conservation practices. The meeting adjourned at 2:45 PM.